



## Utah Governor's Office *of* Economic Development

### 9 Steps of Successful International Networking



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# 9 Steps of International Networking

## Business Protocols in Latin America

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# Languages in the Americas

- The combination of European, Asian, African and indigineous cultures has created a diverse population in the Americas.
- While Spanish is the national language of the majority of countries, Portuguese is the continent's most spoken language due to the population size of Brazil (198 Million), where the official language is Portuguese.
- Other official languages include English (Canada), French (Canada, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint Barthélemy, St. Martin and Saint-Pierre and Miquelon) and Dutch (Suriname).
- Indigenenous languages: Aymara (Bolivia, Peru and Chile), Guaraní (Paraguay, Bolivia, Argentina and Brazil), Quechua (Andes - Western South America).
- As a matter of developing a good business relationship, someone in the U.S. company should speak at least conversational Spanish well. This allows for more flexibility in the business relationship.
- When negotiating a contract, make sure you have proper legal counsel as business terms vary even within a country.





# Religion and Politics in the Americas

- More than 80% of the Americas are Roman Catholic. Protestant and non-Christian religions have been growing significantly.
- As a suggestion, do not bring up religion as part of the conversation, even if it is informal. The Catholic Church has greatly influenced the culture, attitudes, and history of all Latin America and catholic Holidays are celebrated widely. Religion in Latin America is a very personal issue and most people do not discuss religion unless you are a parishioner in the same Church.
- A good example of the influence of the Catholic Church and the political tensions it created is Mexico: The Mexican Constitution was drafted during the revolution in an attempt to transfer power from the Catholic Church to the people. Although it guaranteed freedom of worship, it banned public displays of worship and it did not allow churches to own property or exist as legal entities. In 1922, the law was changed, endowign churches with more legal rights. Although government officials often ignored the previous restrictions, the new law relieved tension between the state and various religions – without forcing the government to endorse a specific religion.
- Politics is also a sensitive subject and is not discussed in the same manner as in the U.S. The same advise follows for politics as for religion.





# Customs and Courtesies

- In Mexico and Latin America, the usual business greeting is with a handshake. It is considered rude and uncivilized if you do not shake the hand of every man and woman in a group. Eye contact and correct posture are essential at first meetings.
- Friends and business partners who have become friends commonly embrace (men only). This is a general rule and, of course, there are exceptions. For example, in Argentina and Uruguay both men and women who are friends will kiss on the cheek and sometimes on both cheeks.
- Try to use a formal greeting the first time, e.g. Sr. Miguel Rovira Gandara or Sra. Michelle Schober de Rovira. Demonstrates respect. Do not call people by their first names at first meetings.
- Note that cheek-kissing between two men is usually seen as a sign of homosexuality or femininity in the most conservative countries, except father-son cases and very rarely, close friend kissing.
- Greeting women is more formal the first time. A handshake is appropriate. Once you know the woman in a social context and the professional relationship develops, a woman may extend her cheek for a “cheek kiss”.
- You need to read the cues for this. Err on the side of caution. A “cheek kiss” is performed cheek to cheek (no lips involved) and only on one cheek. Failure to perform a “cheek kiss” is not considered insulting but performing a “cheek kiss” when the cheek is not extended would be considered an affront and rude.





# Customs and Courtesies

- In most Latin American countries, three meals a day are typical. Sometimes, there a snack called “un algo” o merienda. Morning and afternoon coffees are customary.
- Lunches are usually between 2-3 PM. Eat a hearty breakfast so you can last till lunch or carry energy bars in your brief case in case you get hungry.
- Dinners start around 8 PM and last between 2-3 hours. There is a lot of socializing done at dinner.
- Diners eat in continental style, with the fork in the left hand and the knife in the right hand. It is considered polite to keep hands (but not elbows) above the table, not in your lap.
- Using a toothpick in public is considered bad manners, as is blowing one’s nose, talking with one’s mouth full, or clearing one’s throat at the table.
- GIFTS: gifts are not required in Latin America. However, if you are visiting someone’s home, it would be polite to bring a small courtesy, e.g. chocolates. Bringing a bottle of wine to a dinner is considered polite but not necessary. Do not bring wine if you are unfamiliar with the host’s preferences.
- Bear in mind that using hand gestures while conversing is very common in Latin America. It is part of the culture. We are very effusive.





# Holidays-When not to schedule trips or meetings:

## Chilean National Holidays

- 1 January Año Nuevo
- 2 April Viernes Santo
- 3 April Sabado Santo
- 4 April Domingo de Pascua
- 1 May Dia del Trabajo
- 21 May Combate Naval de Iquique
- 28 June San Pedro y San Pablo
- 16 July Nuestra Señora del Carmen
- 15 August Asunción de la Virgen
- 18 September Fiestas Patrias
- 19 September Dia del Ejército
- 11 October Dia de la Raza
- 31 October Dia Nac. De las Iglesias Evangelicas
- 1 November Dia de Todos Los Santos
- 8 December Dia de la Inmaculada Concepción
- 15 December Natividad del Señor



## **Holidays-When not to schedule trips or meetings:**

- **When a holiday is in the middle of the week, it moves to the following Friday or Monday. January and February are dead months, it is summer time and there is very little activity. Kids have winter vacation (two weeks) in July and in September schools close during the week of the 18<sup>th</sup> due to the Chilean Independence Day.**





# More holidays

## Official Mexico National Holidays

- 1 January
- 5 February
- 21 March
- 1 May
- 16 September
- 20 November
- 25 December

## Non Official Holidays that may include Days off Work

- 21 March Semana Santa
- 5 May Annivery of la Batalla de Puebla)
- 10 May Día de la Madre
- 15 May Día del Maestro
- 15 Sept Independance
- 12 Dec Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe
- 25 Dec Christmas







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